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February 18<sup>th</sup>, 2020

Paula Wilson  
Idaho Department of Environmental Quality  
1410 N. Hilton  
Boise, ID 83706

Thank you for considering our comments on IDEQ's February 6th, 2020, negotiated rulemaking for ore processing by cyanidation.

Idaho Rivers United (IRU) is a 501(c)3 nonprofit environmental advocacy organization that is dedicated to protecting Idaho rivers and restoring our native fish populations. For almost 30 years, IRU has been working to defend Wild and Scenic rivers, advocate for endangered and threatened aquatic species, reform hydropower policy and promote enhanced water quality in all of Idaho's rivers.

IRU represents 3,500 river-loving, environmentally attuned members throughout Idaho and beyond. Our members and supporters expect protection of rivers for their ecological, scenic and recreational values. Therefore, our mission is to execute outstanding and thorough river preservation and conservation work to ensure environmental integrity of all of Idaho's river and citizens.

On behalf of our members and our rivers, we appreciate the opportunity to participate in the rulemaking process. Our comments are included in this letter. If you have any questions about our comments, please contact us at 208-343-7481, or by email at reese@idahorivers.org. Thank you.

For our rivers,

Reese Hodges  
Conservation Associate  
Idaho Rivers United

Idaho Rivers United supports the use of best available science as guidance throughout the rulemaking process. Considering both the continuing global legacy of the mining sector as the one of the most pollutive industries, and the value of clean, healthy rivers for our community and environment's well-being, the importance of robust rules regarding cyanidation cannot be overstated. There is a reason that cyanide leach mining is banned in Montana, Wisconsin, Germany, Czech Republic, Hungary, and Costa Rica; it has a history of causing devastating environmental and human health impacts. Yet, it remains the industry standard practice for extracting gold from ore, because of its cost effectiveness. We urge you to stand strong and continue your mission "to protect human health and the quality of Idaho's air, land, and water", despite calls to reduce the rules and requirements that help fulfill that mission.

#### **200.04.b.ii – Subbase Layers or Performance Based Equivalent**

It is the stance of Idaho Rivers United that the rulemaking process should not be used to reduce the critical protections that minimize the risk of contamination to waters of the state. Idaho Rivers United supports Idaho DEQ's requirements for compacted subbase layers with a minimum of 24 inches below the synthetic liners to minimize any potential leak of contaminants. IRU understands that industry representatives have concerns about the costs of installing a subbase of at least 24 inches, however there is not sufficient literature or evidence to support a subbase of less than this standard. As pointed out at the February 6<sup>th</sup> meeting, the literature supports a subbase of at least 24 inches, and Nevada's requirement of only 12 inches is related to a stricter cyanide WAD limit. In addition, Nevada operates in a different environment than many potential cyanide leach mine locations in Idaho; with different soil compositions, ground water levels, and surface water interactions. Idaho DEQ's rule should be just that; an Idaho rule that pertains to the geophysical and climatic conditions of Idaho.

Idaho Rivers United has great concern for the potential impacts of cyanide leach mining to Idaho's ESA listed Bull Trout, Chinook Salmon, and Steelhead; as well as the recreational values that our clean rivers provide. Thank you for the opportunity to submit comments during this important process.